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In the absence of Ms. Lintonen (Finland), Ms. Santizo-Sandoval (Guatemala), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Agenda item 54: Sustainable development (*continued*) (A/62/343, A/62/356 and A/62/486; A/C.2/62/2; A/C.2/62/L.5)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*continued*) (A/62/262 and A/62/376)

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(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (*continued*) (A/62/276; A/C.2/62/7)

(f) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*) (A/62/276)

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(h) Sustainable mountain development (*continued*) (A/62/292)

(i) Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy (*continued*) (A/62/208; A/C.2/62/8)

1. **Ms. Armanni-Sequi** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) noted the great progress made in 2007 towards a common understanding of disaster risk reduction and its value at the community level, where preparedness and vulnerability could be a life and death issue. Global commitments were meaningless without action at the local level. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) had worked to bridge the local and the global using its network of community-based and nationally recognized societies. In Central America, it had published and disseminated handbooks on disaster risk reduction to enhance disaster management at the community level. That project was very much in line with priority 3 of the Hyogo Framework for Action and with the recommendations that the Framework be implemented through multi-stakeholder partnerships. The project had been carried out with the support of the ProVention Consortium and the Organization of American States, and in cooperation with various international and national stakeholders.

2. The work of IFRC in partnership with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction had included the launching on 9 October 2007 of the Global Alliance on disaster risk reduction in order to bring together resources and expertise to confront the humanitarian and development challenges posed by natural disasters. Such collaboration was essential in view of the increased incidence of natural disasters and the changes in weather characteristics and patterns. Greater priority should be given to climate-related disasters and linkages with the scientific community should be enhanced. To that end, IFRC had cooperated with the World Meteorological Organization in establishing the International Early Warning Platform.

3. The number of natural disasters was rising at an alarming rate: IFRC had responded to 482 disaster events in 2006, compared to 287 in 2004, and another record figure was expected for 2007.

4. The Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre, established in The Hague in 2002 with the support of the Netherlands Red Cross, was respected by professionals throughout the world and was well-connected to the main global and regional institutions in that field. It had also become an indispensable link between disaster risk reduction and climate change.

5. One of the main themes of the thirtieth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, to be held in Geneva at the end of November, was to be the prevention, reduction and response to the impact of climate change on vulnerable people. The Conference should deliver a strong collective commitment to action on that issue.

6. IFRC called on Member States to renew their commitment to disaster risk reduction and to recognize its place in adaptation strategies. A bridge should be constructed between the discussions in Kobe and those in Kyoto. Member States should also strengthen their national platforms and make firm pledges at the thirtieth International Conference. IFRC requested support for its efforts through the Global Alliance or through national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. Governments should use their national societies as auxiliaries to enhance technical expertise, improve information sharing and help to protect lives and livelihoods.

7. **Ms. Bensmail** (Algeria) said that the Secretary-General's report (A/62/262) indicated the progress made by Governments and United Nations organizations towards achieving sustainable development goals that encompassed economic, social and environmental aspects in a balanced and integrated manner. It was essential to enhance the impact and visibility of programme activities by increasing productive investments in rural and agricultural areas in order to achieve food security.

8. Algeria was committed to sustainable development, in particular through the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. It would take action at all levels and engage in international cooperation in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Those efforts would contribute to integrating the three interdependent and complementary pillars of sustainable development: economic development, social development and the environment. The elimination of poverty, changes in inappropriate production methods and consumption patterns and the protection and management of natural resources were prerequisites for sustainable development.

9. Algeria's plan for the consolidation of economic growth in all sectors took account of sustainable development principles and environmental protection, while supporting economic growth and combating poverty and social exclusion. In response to the main national development challenges and in relation to the Millennium Development Goals, Algeria had implemented a development support programme for the highlands and the south of the country, in order to reduce regional and local inequalities and bring a sustainable improvement in living conditions in those regions. The national agricultural development plan was intended to meet food security needs, combat the continuing degradation of the environment and desertification and protect natural resources and the environment.

10. Environmental deterioration and climate change had a negative impact on the sustainable development of all countries, especially the developing countries, and in particular the least developed countries of Africa. Algeria was continuing and expanding its efforts in relation to the commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, as well as the United Nations Millennium Summit.

11. The Algerian Government was deeply committed to implementing strategies for environmental protection and the sustainable management of natural resources. State regulatory bodies had focused on environmental preservation in the context of the sustainable development strategy since the beginning of 2000. Algeria had promulgated legislative texts covering environmental preservation issues to contribute to the sustainability and stability of the economic and social development process. There were also laws on waste management, environmental protection and the prevention of major risks designed to assess the environmental impact of development projects and their impact on the life of the population. It was essential to take the human dimension into account in the process of sustainable development and environmental protection. Innovative action in that area focused on education and awareness raising and the offering of green employment in local communities.

12. Algeria extended its appreciation to the Mediterranean Action Plan for awarding the title of Mediterranean Ambassador to its Minister for Land Management, Environment and Tourism, who was also President of the World Deserts Foundation, in recognition of Algeria's efforts to protect nature and sustainable development and also coastal areas, ecosystems and biodiversity in the Mediterranean.

13. At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, Heads of State had made a commitment to substantially reducing the loss of biodiversity in their respective countries before 2010. That goal could still be attained if the international community would renew its efforts and stop the current catastrophic loss.

States should pool their efforts and resources for the sake of their shared future, in a determined fight for the development of human rights, a healthy environment, a dignified and decent life and harmonious, real, sustainable and global development for the benefit of all. Algeria was firmly committed to the establishment of an international partnership based on an integrated approach that would support the synergies needed to respond better to the immense challenges of climate change, desertification and biodiversity in order to achieve sustainable development.

14. **Ms. Toutkhalian** (Armenia) said that the promotion of new and renewable energy sources was vital for Armenia, a small landlocked country without significant resources of coal, oil or gas. In 2005 the Government had adopted an energy security and independence strategy which had identified three main priorities — the use of renewable or alternative sources of energy, the use of nuclear energy and the diversification of energy sources — in addition to participation in regional energy projects.

15. Armenia had considerable potential renewable energy sources such as hydropower, wind power and solar energy. The Government had created favourable conditions for alternative energy development such as tax and customs privileges for importing equipment for wind energy station construction. Currently available resources should be sufficient to establish a wind power system which could produce a total of over 450 megawatts of energy. The project would be implemented over the next 15 years. Armenia also had significant solar energy development potential, which could substantially reduce energy imports. Armenia had all the necessary conditions, including experts and infrastructure, to develop renewable energy technologies.

16. The Government of Armenia had adopted a law on energy and a law on energy saving and renewable energy, in addition to a national energy sector development strategy. The strategy identified the need to prioritize and make use of Armenia's renewable energy potential of over 5 billion kilowatts, most of it from hydroenergy.

17. The Fund for Energy Saving and Renewable Energy had been created with the assistance of donor organizations such as the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and USAID. For countries such as Armenia, with considerable renewable energy resources but an inadequate technological base, the transfer of technologies from developed countries would propel the whole sector to a new level. The financial assistance, technical support and expertise provided by the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other entities were invaluable.

18. With those measures and a realistic assessment of the renewable energy resources available, Armenia would eventually be able to meet its energy needs from its own resources.

19. **Ms. Bruell-Melchior** (Monaco) said that the challenge of climate change called for commitment on the part of all stakeholders, and that a substantial proportion of investments planned for the energy sector must be devoted to renewable sources. The Principality was reducing its reliance on fossil fuels in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To that end, it was introducing solar heating in buildings and diester in buses, encouraged car-pooling and offered State subsidies for the purchase of ecological vehicles, either hybrid or electric, that also used biofuel.

20. In February 2008 Monaco would host the tenth special session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum, to be attended by professionals and investors involved in research, development and marketing relating to new technologies in the environmental field. It had recently enacted laws that would serve as an incentive for those wishing to establish and manage ecologically and socially responsible investment funds. Monaco was negotiating a clean development mechanism agreement with an African country which included projects to use solar energy for water supplies and rural electrification. Near Monaco, the first forest carbon sink in Europe in the framework of the Kyoto Protocol and the UNEP Billion Tree Campaign would capture carbon dioxide in areas around the Principality and combat global warming. As a member of the Environmental Integrity Group, Monaco benefited from advantageous rates for maintenance of its National Register of Carbon Units under the Framework Convention on Climate Change and an agreement had been signed with the National Forestry Office for forestry projects to combat global warming.

21. Reiterating Monaco's support for UNEP and its transformation into the United Nations Environment

Organization, she stressed the need for predictable funding and wider scientific expertise. Her delegation firmly supported the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Global Survey of Early Warning Systems and trusted that the International Year of Planet Earth in 2008 would mobilize all citizens of the world to face the challenges ahead.

22. **Mr. Rangel** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his Government, in accordance with the internationally agreed goals, had undertaken extensive efforts to bring about positive changes, with strong community participation. The strengthening of sustainable development had been a key element in the Government's actions. Such development had to involve cooperation that promoted independence and development in a disinterested manner and was free of conditions that would lead to domination and poverty.

23. Avoiding responsibility for the issue of climate change, by denying the central role of fossil fuels in the energy sector and underestimating existing carbon capture technologies, served only to fuel greed. The financing of climate change efforts should not focus on carbon emissions trading, which mostly benefited only developed countries. The sovereign right of countries to decide on the use of their natural resources and their energy and environmental policy should be respected and his country rejected any attempt to link oil prices to economic crises and increased poverty in many countries. Multilateralism should be enhanced by strengthening mechanisms for development cooperation based on solidarity and inclusiveness that ensured greater well-being and social justice.

24. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, in relation to the issue of climate change and atmospheric pollution, was still valid, as was the link with the issue of poverty. The developed countries should demonstrate their willingness to change their currently unsustainable production and consumption patterns. They should also make progress towards meeting the 0.7 per cent target for ODA and provide guarantees for the unconditional transfer of clean and appropriate technologies. The entire framework of clean development mechanisms should be modified, as it had not benefited the developing countries but had become an economic incentive that exacerbated the environmental crisis and encouraged the prevailing production and consumption model, without significantly reducing the greenhouse gas emissions produced by the industrialized countries.

25. Desertification and its effects also went hand in hand with poverty, constituting a serious and global problem. If desertification was not halted or reversed, food production in many areas would diminish, leading to malnutrition and even famine. The developed countries should renew their commitment to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, setting measurable goals and providing financial resources. Additional funds from new donors and from the Global Environment Facility were needed.

26. The Convention on Biological Diversity was the ideal instrument to promote activities for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. His delegation supported the implementation of that Convention and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, as well as other agreements relating to biodiversity and the Johannesburg commitment to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss significantly by 2010. For the least developed countries, technology transfer and financial resources were needed to assist in the process of adapting their monitoring and information systems, as the producing or exporting countries did not currently have segregation systems to guarantee identity protection. Standards should be developed for the identification, handling, packaging and transport of living modified organisms in order to facilitate the establishment of clear rules in the international system. His country totally rejected the use of genetic use restriction technologies (terminator technologies), field trials and the marketing of sterile seed technologies. Financial resources should not be allocated to cooperation for research and studies to measure the impacts of such technology on agricultural biological diversity and specifically the socioeconomic, ecological and cultural impacts on the basis of "case-by-case" risk assessment.

27. In recent years there had been an orchestrated campaign to portray the oil-producing countries as the cause of the hunger and poverty from which South countries had suffered for years. That campaign ignored the main role played by the huge external debt that had led many countries to total ruin. Energy could be used either to eliminate poverty and improve the quality of life of peoples or to increase inequality and the profits of private multinational companies.

28. Integration and cooperation between peoples, based on the principles of solidarity, complementarity and reciprocity, were the true mechanisms for attacking poverty, achieving economic and social development and forging democratic societies where justice and social equity prevailed. Through energy cooperation the countries of the South could increase their strengths and reduce their vulnerabilities. Over 80 per cent of the oil and gas reserves of the American continent were in Latin America and could be placed at the service of its peoples. Solidarity-based energy integration would contribute to comprehensive development and promote social justice in the countries of the continent. In that context, consideration should be given to factors that distorted energy costs and mainly benefited the masters of the world economy.

29. Energy consumption patterns had to be changed to allow ethical and efficient energy use and support for cooperation programmes and activities for energy saving. States should promote the sustainable development of renewable alternative energies, including biofuels, and promote the environmentally friendly use of fossil fuels, as they would continue to play a dominant role in future decades. The agricultural, social and environmental aspects of biofuel production and use should be harmonized in order to avoid any risk to countries' food security.

30. States should reach a consensus in order to achieve in a harmonious manner the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic development, social development and environmental protection — so that solidarity, equality and the dignity of peoples would prevail. Current and future generations would condemn them or thank them for their efforts.

31. **Ms. Gustava** (Mozambique), speaking on item 54 (c), said that the impact of the unprecedented increase in natural disasters had been felt more in developing countries, given their lack of human and technical resources for response and adaptation. More decisive, sustained and systematic risk reduction through accelerated implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and strengthened national and local capacities were therefore required, as was further development and use of scientific and technical knowledge for building resilience to natural disasters. International cooperation must address vulnerabilities to natural disasters through strengthened partnerships and coordination among countries.

32. Mozambique's geographical location, long coastline and local climatic influences made it prone to natural disasters, aggravated in turn by inadequate infrastructures; disaster management was thus a cross-cutting issue forming an integral part of the Government's agenda. Success in fighting poverty depended on reducing the vulnerability of the poor, who were most exposed. Accordingly, in 2006 the Government had adopted its Natural Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Master Plan comprising a 10-year programme to prepare responses and resistance to the effects of natural disasters. There was also a round-the-clock national operative emergency centre run by various ministries.

33. Those measures' positive impact had been visible during the recent floods and cyclones. Despite the international community's generous support, more cooperation was called for and universal access to all information and services, exchange of experience and knowledge, and training must be ensured so that developing countries could improve their risk reduction and adaptation to climate change. She exhorted the international community, especially the international financial institutions, to support disaster-stricken countries' efforts at risk reduction and in the post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation process.

34. **Mr. Heller** (Mexico) said that the international community had yet to integrate environmental issues into global, regional and national agendas, while the environment must be incorporated into national development policies, so that sustainable development was effectively promoted and could thus contribute to poverty eradication. The greatest challenge was the effective translation of the cross-cutting sustainable development agenda into all programmes and activities, not only of the Government but of all sectors of society.

35. Mexico was endeavouring to make the environment an element of competitiveness and social and economic development and a cross-cutting theme of public policy that required close coordination at the various levels of the Government, whose National Development Plan provided for increased efforts to enhance inter-agency coordination and intersectoral integration.

36. Development models that did not take the environment into account led to climate change, loss of biodiversity, air and water pollution, environmental

and health degradation caused by improper handling of chemicals, and desertification. Mexico would continue to participate in international cooperation to help consolidate an international agenda founded on clearly defined principles and supported by strong institutions.

37. The failure of the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to agree on policy options and actions for implementing sustainable development objectives had demonstrated the need for a critical review of the Commission's procedures and issues so as to avoid duplication and the loss of already limited financial resources. Nonetheless, the Commission's discussions had been useful and should result in an appeal to strengthen energy efficiency, renewable energy, adaptation and mitigation, with an intersectoral approach based on best practices.

38. Already facing the adverse impact of climate change, Mexico was intensifying its mitigation policies and following the guidelines of its new National Strategy. The clean development mechanism was not enough; the global scale of mitigation needed to be increased through measurable and verifiable actions in agreed multilateral forums, provided that they were consistent with national development needs. Mexico was ready to negotiate, under the aegis of the Climate Change Convention, a new, balanced, fair climate change regime, which should include sectoral approaches, intensity indicators, and a fund with clear, inclusive funding arrangements, as well as new international cooperation mechanisms with incentives that complemented — rather than replaced — developing countries' national mitigation efforts and were proportional to those efforts. Adaptation to climate change must also be given priority in order to strengthen response capacity and reduce vulnerability. Mexico trusted that the Bali Climate Change Conference would establish a road map and the mechanisms for negotiation of the future climate change regime.

39. **Ms. Makhumula** (Malawi) said that, despite positive emerging trends, more needed to be done to bring prosperity to many parts of the world, especially Africa, where poverty was appallingly high. Implementation of the 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Action must be accelerated as a matter of urgency in order to promote economic and social development and environmental protection and, ultimately, the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Her delegation looked forward to the consideration at the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development of the relevant thematic clusters, including agriculture, especially with reference to Africa's least developed countries. Agriculture was the engine of Malawi's economy and provided a livelihood for most of its population, who lived in rural areas.

40. Commending the call for political will expressed during the recent High-level Event on Climate Change, she urged the industrialized nations to take the lead in reducing carbon emissions and helping developing countries invest in new low-carbon-emission technologies, pursuant to the Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. Only then could the developing countries overcome the constraints identified during the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. She trusted that the Bali Climate Change Conference would have positive outcomes to address the effects of climate change.

41. She appealed to the United Nations to ensure that the least developed countries received the technical assistance that would enable them to develop appropriate and affordable technologies for renewable energy, which were essential in the fight against deforestation and desertification, especially in rural Africa, where wood was the only source of energy. Her country continued to promote the use of renewable energy, as well as putting disaster reduction high on its developmental agenda in accordance with the Hyogo Framework for Action. Activities included guidance for district officials, development of district disaster risk management plans, and raising awareness of inhabitants of flood-prone areas.

42. **Mr. Al-Basri** (Iraq) said that the first challenge of sustainable development was managing resources in a way that raised living standards without causing conflicts. Development could not be addressed in isolation from environmental concerns. Although his country's laws required development projects to take into account environmental impact, development in Iraq was unfortunately far from meeting the requirements of sustainability. Time, money and effort were needed to conduct regional environmental impact studies in conjunction with Iraq's neighbours and devise strategies to increase the use of clean energy.

43. His country also suffered from radiation pollution due to industrial and military activities. In 2004 UNEP, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment and with funding from Japan, had launched an environmental cleanup project that included a facility for the disposal of radioactive waste. Until recently, Iraq had not been a party to any international environmental conventions, but in recent years it had deposited its instrument of accession to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and was taking steps to accede to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes.

44. Protection of the environment, and in particular the reduction of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, was important for sustainable development. His country was in the process of ratifying the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was the cornerstone of international cooperation in that regard and should be universalized. It would combat corruption, establish transparency in its oil sector and continue to implement development projects in accordance with the International Compact with Iraq, and expected the international community to fulfil its commitments to provide the necessary resources under the international partnership provided for under that initiative.

45. **Mr. Butagira** (Uganda) said that issues relating to energy, global climate, drought and desertification and disaster reduction were closely related and required coordinated policies supported by multilateral cooperation and global partnership. Energy was at the heart of sustainable development challenges, and developing countries should have access to clean technology and new, renewable and affordable sources of energy.

46. The search for renewable energy, particularly biofuel derived from food crops, had negative implications for the developing countries with respect to trade, agriculture and food security. Strong demand for such crops was likely to keep their prices high, making farmers in developed countries less supportive of concessions in the Doha Round. Non-tariff barriers such as regulations governing genetically modified crops were likely to continue to restrict access to potential agricultural export markets.

47. If the current trend of worsening drought and desertification continued, sub-Saharan Africa would have to wait until 2030 to meet the target set in the Millennium Development Goals for the elimination of hunger. Climate change was exacerbating the challenge posed by desertification and drought, notwithstanding the laudable efforts under way within the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Continued migration from rural to urban areas prompted by rural poverty further harmed vulnerable economies and pushed increasing numbers of people in developing countries below the poverty line.

48. Severe flooding in Uganda was currently causing major damage to transport infrastructure and was destroying crops and farmland, thereby jeopardizing development for years to come. International disaster response and reduction efforts should focus on enhancing and strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to provide effective humanitarian assistance programmes, including under the Hyogo Framework for Action. His Government attached high priority to promoting resilience to disasters.

49. An integrated and balanced approach was required in policies to address the environmental, social and economic dimensions of environmental degradation. The approach should be based on the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility and on national sustainable development strategies.

50. The international community thus far had lacked the political will to provide developing countries with sufficient resources to achieve the goals of sustainable development. He emphasized the need for increased financial and technical assistance, a political commitment to improve access to available environmentally friendly technologies, efforts to stimulate the development of more innovative technologies, and measures to engage the private sector as an essential partner. In addition, developing countries required support in the form of a fair chance to trade, effective debt relief, increased FDI and assistance for capacity-building.

51. **Mr. Issetov** (Kazakhstan) said that Kazakhstan was committed to the full implementation of the targets agreed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, by initiating complex political, economic and social reforms to establish a democratic State with a market economy. The main economic priority for Kazakhstan was to avoid overdependence on its oil, gas and

minerals sector and to use those natural assets to build a diversified and highly technological economy with a high value-added component. The introduction of international technical and business standards, accession to the World Trade Organization, promotion of corporate governance, education and administrative reform had been identified as some of the key drivers in that process. With the aim of reducing bureaucracy and combating corruption, the Government of Kazakhstan was introducing e-government in all major sectors. Provision of quality education to meet the challenges of the times was an important factor for economic and social development. Higher education and vocational training were provided free of charge in Kazakhstan.

52. If not confronted properly, climate change might have irreversible consequences for life on Earth. In the interests of future generations, all countries had to take practical actions to confront that threat and to reduce emissions. Developed countries had a critical role to play in providing technological and financial support to developing countries so that they too could mitigate the effects of climate change.

53. Energy efficiency was a critical factor in lowering energy consumption and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, and in increasing industrial competitiveness. At the same time, introduction of environmentally sound and energy-efficient models of production and consumption was very important for sustainable development. Kazakhstan was systematically identifying energy wastage and opportunities to improve existing technologies and to make use of alternative energy resources. In 2006, it had adopted an ecological code to harmonize national ecological law with international agreements. The Government intended to intensify its control over observance of environmental legislation during the development of oilfields and was considering the idea of international "green oil" certificates, which would require rigid observance of ecological standards during hydrocarbon extraction.

54. **Mr. Alahraf** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the developed countries and international financial institutions needed to increase aid to developing countries. Rural agricultural development was particularly important. Desertification claimed more arable land each year, particularly in Africa, and had displaced millions of people. Financial assistance, technology transfer and capacity-building provided under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification should be stepped up to encourage projects to reclaim land and restore vegetative cover. His own country had expended much effort and resources on confronting the challenges posed by desertification.

55. Support needed to be maintained for the UNDP country programmes, particularly in the area of training personnel to design and implement sustainable development plans. Equitable macroeconomic policies that took into account the interests of the poor played a major role. The Annual Ministerial Review and the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the recent substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva had reiterated that eradicating poverty was the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. He stressed that rural and agricultural development were integral to achieving food security, and that measures to combat climate change needed to be balanced against the needs of developing countries and their right to development. The regional United Nations economic commissions had an important role to play, and he welcomed the establishment by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) of the Food Security and Sustainable Development Division. He called for technological assistance to help African States incorporate the latest scientific advances into their development plans, and for enhanced cooperation between ECA and the African Union.

56. **Mr. Boureima** (Niger) noted that the issue of desertification was of crucial importance for his country. His delegation welcomed the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance implementation of the Convention, recently approved by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which would cover the period 2008-2018. Its adoption bore witness to the unswerving commitment of the international community to maintain momentum in combating a phenomenon whose scale and seriousness made it a real threat, in particular to the populations of the developing countries.

57. That firm commitment should find expression in concrete actions capable of permanently reversing the trend towards environmental degradation. That would presuppose that adequate and predictable resources were provided to the countries affected and the

international bodies assisting them. In that connection, all Parties to the Convention, in particular those blessed with resources, had an obligation to demonstrate the political will needed to provide the secretariat of the Convention with a serious budget. In any event, the developing countries, owing to their limited financial capacity and their technological backwardness, counted greatly on partner support to implement their national or regional initiatives. That was certainly the case for the Niger, three quarters of whose area was desert. Drought and desertification had therefore always been a major concern for his country, which had taken a number of steps in response.

58. Such steps ranged from sectoral approaches to combat desertification to the creation in 1996 of the National Council for Sustainable Development, to act as the institutional framework.

59. The Niger had also adopted a National Environmental Plan for Sustainable Development, which in turn was one of the underpinning programmes of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the second iteration of which had been approved by the Niger's development partners on 26 October. The Niger thus had need of assistance from the international community in order to make the plan an effective instrument to combat desertification and climate change, enabling it to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

60. **Ms. Al-Mansoori** (United Arab Emirates) said that her country's success in turning its harsh desert landscape into a green space with first-rate oceanfront facilities was the product of a comprehensive national environmental strategy, along the lines of Agenda 21, that involved well-drilling, forestation and ambitious rural development projects all over the country. All development was undertaken with a view to reducing pollution and preserving wildlife, and the latest energy production methods were employed to refine low-emission fuels and encourage their use in vehicles. There was a solar-powered desalinization project, and the Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company was building the world's first fully "green" city, which would be powered entirely by renewable energy sources. Low-energy building techniques were being used and "green buildings" standards had been mandated for the Emirate of Dubai beginning in 2008. Abu Dhabi had just been chosen by UNEP as the site for launching the fourth Global Environment Outlook report (GEO-4), partly in recognition of the pioneering Abu Dhabi Initiative on Environmental Information. She reiterated that the major responsibility for tackling climate change fell on the developed States, as the major producers of greenhouse emissions, and asked that they and the international financial institutions step up development assistance to the developing States to help them confront the environmental problems brought on by poverty, disease, conflict, foreign occupation and arms races.

61. **Mr. Park** Chun-kyoo (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation welcomed the current vigorous discussion on sustainable development issues, in particular their environmental features, and was also pleased that the concept of sustainable development, and strategies for its attainment, had been gaining acceptance as universally shared goals.

62. Efforts should be continued and even accelerated to achieve sustainable development. Shared solutions should be sought, with countries working in concert across all sectors so that environmental sustainability became a key factor in the attainment of the internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and Agenda 21.

63. Furthermore, countries should strengthen efforts to design and put into practice national sustainable development strategies, including voluntary peer review, while at the same time drawing benefit from discussion forums and international organs such as the Commission on Sustainable Development. Discussions at the Commission's sixteenth session in May 2008 could be expected to identify barriers and constraints to sustainable development, as well as to provide an opportunity to exchange lessons learned and best practices. It was to be hoped that the session would revitalize the valuable tradition of building consensus in the sustainable development field.

64. Climate change was intensifying around the world, impeding efforts to attain economic and social development, and would more severely affect the most vulnerable countries and their populations. The Bali Climate Change Conference to be held in December should establish a road map for the post-2012 framework by advancing efforts towards a low-carbon economy. The future framework should be comprehensive yet flexible enough to allow all nations to enlist in a shared global effort, and should encompass all facets of climate change, including

mitigation, adaptation, financing and technology. Given the complexity of global environmental issues, it was imperative to coordinate the environmental activities of the United Nations and to ensure their coherence. Strengthening UNEP and supporting its mandate would provide improved policy guidance and help to set priorities with a strong scientific base.

65. **Mr. Mirilovic** (Serbia) gave some information about the recently concluded sixth ministerial conference "Environment for Europe", held in Belgrade in October. In the ECE region, air pollution was still very high, while more than 100 million people still lacked access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. Notwithstanding energy efficiency improvements and an increased use of renewable resources, energy consumption and the resulting greenhouse gas emissions had increased, while the decline of biodiversity and ecosystem loss continued. The Ministers attending the Conference had called for further improvements of indicator-based environmental assessments and reporting in the region. They had undertaken to pay special attention to strengthening environmental institutions and organizations, to creating and implementing policy instruments, and to capacity-building. They had also underlined the importance of establishing a subregional centre for climate change monitoring in Belgrade and expressed their firm intent to cooperate with other regions by sharing lessons learned and experience gained.

66. It was regrettable that the Commission on Sustainable Development had not reached agreement at its fifteenth session on several important issues, in particular an international agreement on energy efficiency. Serbia hoped that the positions of the negotiating groups would be more flexible at the next session.

67. As a member of the Mountain Partnership, Serbia supported the efforts to allocate more funds for sustainable development of mountain regions. Special efforts should be made to reduce development disparities between those and other regions, by investing in projects that accentuated the relative advantages of the mountains, particularly nature-based tourism. At the same time, regional and multilateral cooperation should be improved, the more so as mountains often spread across national borders. Serbia encouraged the Global Meeting of the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions to foster exchanges of experience and expertise among mountain regions of the world. A draft law ratifying the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians had been sent to the Serbian Parliament and it was expected that it would be adopted soon.

68. Serbia was among the countries most threatened by climate change. In the last two decades, it had experienced a number of droughts, and was now finding it increasingly difficult to renew the protective cover of vegetation, which was leading to land degradation, of varying intensity, affecting over 80 per cent of the country. It was therefore expected that the draft law ratifying the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification would be adopted soon.

69. Having recently ratified the Kyoto Protocol, Serbia called on all parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change to participate actively and constructively in the Bali Climate Change Conference in December, with a view to achieving a comprehensive post-2012 agreement by the end of 2009.

Agenda item 55: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (A/62/8, A/62/219 and A/62/339)

70. **Ms. Tibaijuka** (Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)), introducing the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme on its twenty-first session (A/62/8); the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (Habitat II) (A/62/219); and the report of the Secretary-General on coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda (E/2007/58), said that considerable progress had been made in the past year to strengthen the ability of UN-Habitat to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Statement of Principles and Commitments and Global Plan of Action: The Habitat Agenda (Habitat Agenda).

71. That progress included two landmark decisions reflecting many of the recommendations made by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. One of those decisions, which was directly relevant to United

Nations reform, was the decision of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat to adopt a Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008-2013. The strategic component was driven by an ambitious vision and a robust road map for sustainable urbanization. The vision was of a world in which one out of two urban dwellers would be able to gain access to decent housing, clean water and basic sanitation, and in which humanity could engage in social, economic and cultural pursuits without compromising the ability of future generations to do so. In an increasingly and rapidly urbanizing world, such a vision and road map were critical to the attainment of the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals. The vision was realistic because the road map for the implementation of the Plan was guided by the principle of enhanced partnerships rather than by the capacities of the United Nations or UN-Habitat alone.

72. Over the following six years, UN-Habitat would endeavour to play a truly catalytic role to marshal the goodwill, know-how and resources of all spheres of government, civil society, international, regional and domestic financial institutions and the private and community sectors in order to focus sharply on the key determinants for sustainable urbanization and inclusive urban development. Those determinants were pro-poor land and housing, participatory planning and governance, environmentally sound infrastructure and services and innovative housing and urban finance. Work in those areas would be spearheaded by a global campaign on sustainable urbanization to mobilize political will and commitment.

73. To follow up the Governing Council's decision, and with the endorsement of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, UN-Habitat was collaborating with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on matters concerning urban crime prevention and safety. Those efforts would lead to joint activities on the ground to improve safety, security and justice for all, especially for the one out of three urban dwellers living in the world's slums. UN-Habitat was working very closely with the World Health Organization to address health issues in cities, particularly those affecting the urban poor, and was expanding its collaboration with the World Bank within the framework of the Cities Alliance initiative. Increasing collaboration with regional development banks had thus far resulted in over US $1.5 billion in follow-up investment in pro-poor water and sanitation projects.

74. The vision driving the strategic component of the Medium-Term Plan was also achievable because sustainable urbanization was an achievable objective. The Plan built upon the growing realization of the international community that urbanization, despite its chaotic manifestations, represented a unique opportunity to support economic growth and social advancement in a globalizing world economy. UN-Habitat was proud to be associated with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which, in the State of the World Population 2007 report focused on the theme "Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth". UN-Habitat was also pleased that the UNDP Human Development Report, 2006 on water, had taken note of UN-Habitat's 2003 triennial report, Water and Sanitation in the World's Cities: Local Action for Global Goals, to further amplify and popularize UN-Habitat's findings on the very sad state of affairs in urban slums on those issues. Those examples demonstrated that UN-Habitat, through partnerships and as a grassroots actor, would bring to the fore issues that could then be adopted by other partners.

75. On the institutional front, the Medium-Term Plan aimed to place UN-Habitat at the forefront of reform. Management excellence was a key component of the Plan, and accountability, transparency, results-based monitoring and reporting would become the rule, not the exception. Given the rapid growth of UN-Habitat over the past five years, the programme did not have all the requisite expertise in house. She therefore appealed to Member States in a position to do so to provide additional resources in cash or in kind to help implement state-of-the-art management processes and reform befitting UN-Habitat's new status.

76. The financial regulations and rules governing the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation had been revised in 2006. By its resolution 21/10, the Governing Council of UN-Habitat had decided to introduce experimental reimbursable seeding operations to facilitate the financing of pro-poor housing and urban development. The landmark resolution enabled the United Nations system, for the first time, to support the efforts of Member States to scale up pilot slum upgrading and low-income housing initiatives through innovative financing mechanisms.

77. The intention of the new operations was not to establish a new financial institution or create new debt instruments. The objective was to work with existing financial institutions at the country level to lower the perceived risks associated with lending to the urban poor. That would be accomplished by a wide array of confidence-building measures, including policy advisory services, capacity-building assistance, and credit enhancement in the form of guarantees combining public investments, private capital, and the efforts of low-income households.

78. UN-Habitat hoped that the facility would remove one of the long-lasting barriers to urban poverty reduction and thereby enable and empower the urban poor to leverage their savings and assets to create wealth through housing and to become true stakeholders in society.

79. With support from Members States, UN-Habitat would be in a position swiftly to mobilize private sector finance to deliver decent housing for low-income people. Under the Slum Upgrading Facility pilot projects, private sector banks had already agreed to provide long-term financing for low-income housing, such as women's housing cooperatives in the United Republic of Tanzania and Kenya. Technical assistance was being provided by the Chinese authorities to establish local construction firms capable of producing mid-rise buildings at low cost to enable the poor to remain on prime land close to the central business district in the city of Yangzhou. UN-Habitat had recently reached an agreement with United States private sector actors to mobilize resources for affordable low-income housing in Latin America through loans from domestic banks.

80. The majority of human beings currently lived in cities, and the process was accelerating. That transformation had a direct bearing on the strategies required to attain the Millennium Development Goals, in view of the urbanization of poverty. The international community had both a moral and ethical responsibility to make cities more equitable, inclusive and sustainable.

81. World Habitat Day had focused in 2007 on the challenges of urban safety and security. Inequality bred insecurity because it was based on institutional bottlenecks that prevented people from reaching their full potential. Invariably, that bred discontent and hostility, endangering society. In addition to crime and violence, lack of secure tenure and substantial vulnerability to natural disasters, to a great extent affected poor people more than the rich. Resilience was highly correlated to income both within and between nations.

82. It was no coincidence that climate change had emerged at the forefront of international debate at the same time, and virtually at the same pace, as the world was becoming more urbanized. Urbanization caused irreversible changes in production and consumption patterns: cities were already responsible for 75 per cent of global energy consumption and 80 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. Roughly half of the emissions were caused by the burning of fossil fuels for urban transport; the other half came from heating, cooling and maintaining buildings and homes. The measures envisaged at the global and national levels to address those issues had yet to be accompanied by concerted measures at the city and local levels. Immediate action was required to make cities and towns more sustainable through appropriate land-use plans, transport modalities and building designs. Such measures would have a major impact on the pace of global warming.

83. At the same time, immediate adaptation measures were essential in order to reduce vulnerability. To that end, cities and settlements must be properly planned in order to prevent loss of lives and property. The people most vulnerable to the impact of climate change were the urban poor, who contributed least to climate change. Accordingly, adaptation and mitigation had always been part of UN-Habitat's core mandate namely to improve housing and urban development in order to reduce poverty and make cities and settlements safer, more sustainable and more resilient. Action to combat climate change must occur at the local level. Policymakers, planners, environmental specialists and citizens should join forces to place cities and urban issues at the forefront of the sustainable development agenda and of national development agendas. The time had come to place the urban agenda at the centre of the international community's deliberations and to institute a task monitoring system to enable all partners to work together to meet the challenges of rapid urbanization, urban poverty and climate change.

84. Preparations had begun for the fourth session of the World Urban Forum, to be hosted by the Government of China in Nanjing in October 2008. With the theme "harmonious urbanization", it would

focus on ways to secure balanced territorial development and rural-urban linkages. She hoped that Member States and all Habitat Agenda partners would prepare adequately for the Forum and use the occasion to showcase their best practices so that participants could learn from one another in the interests of delivering the Habitat Agenda.

85. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil) said that she wished to comment on references to her country in the UN-Habitat report *Enhancing Urban Safety and Security*. Published at the beginning of October 2007, the report had generated wide public comment in Brazil and abroad on account of the data it presented on the crime rates in the State of São Paulo. However, the figures given related to the year 1999 and the crime rate in São Paulo had steadily declined since then. It had been 18.39 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants in 2006 and was expected to go down even further in 2007, to 11.8 deaths per 100,000.

86. Brazil's new gun law, the Disarmament Statute, had contributed significantly to the decline in deaths from firearms in the entire country. According to a joint study by the Ministries of Health and Justice, the death rate from guns had dropped by 18 per cent since the Statute had been enacted in 2003, saving some 24,000 lives.

87. She hoped that UN-Habitat would revise the data in the report in order to convey a more accurate picture of crime prevention and security in Brazil.

88. **Ms. Tibaijuka** (Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)) expressed regret that outdated data had been published, explaining that the error had occurred because a number of countries had not joined the Global Urban Observatory. UN-Habitat would be pleased to update the data for the State of São Paulo to reflect the situation more accurately.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.